

# HANDCUFF KING HOUDINI SCORES

## WASHINGTON POLICE



### JBX

## FRANK MORSE

PICKING my way nervously through a group of manacle-laden detectives last Tuesday evening, I reached the back of Chase's stage and accosted Mr. Harry Houdini, the "Handcuff King," to whom I disclosed my identity and mentioned my opinion of his stunt.

"When can we get together for a wordfest?" I inquired.

"Right now, if you like," he replied with an energetic manner that aroused my admiration.

"Tomorrow morning will do," I hedged, "if you can make it early enough."

"I usually sleep until seven-thirty," he said, apologetically, "but if you want to see me earlier than that—"

"Heaven forbid," I interrupted, with a shiver. "Let us compromise on eleven." And we did.

At the Regent next morning I found him with his wife, who is his stage partner, and their diminutive pet dog, who, as Mrs. Houdini explained plaintively, seems to be the only living creature that does not insist upon bringing manacles to bind her husband's limbs. It struck me that I had a look-in on the dog's rating, but I did not urge the point.

"You impressed the detectives very much last night," I told Houdini. "I heard one of them declare most emphatically that you were 'on the dead level.'"

"The handcuffs they tried on me were easy," he replied.

"Evidently the stationhouse in which they locked you up was equally easy," I said, admiringly. "I should like to know how you get out. It might be useful information."

"I took a long chance there," he said, and there was a noticeable tinge of littleness in his voice.

"How was that?"

"They didn't give me a square deal," he replied. "I went to them

lice at the precinct to which they took me agreed to this, but after the test was started, I heard him whisper to one of his men to bring him the locks for another cell.

"Naturally I objected to any change and he became most offensive in his manner. He told me his orders were to lock me up and keep me there, and intimated that if I was afraid I could pass the thing up and take the consequences. I remonstrated with him and told him to remember that I was not a criminal. That I had come to him of my own accord and deserved the courtesy due an equal. But he could not see it, and continued his brutal threatening attitude.

"Then I lost my head and went ahead recklessly. I know now that I was foolish to do so, for my reputation is well established in every large city in the world, and I did not need the Washington test. Of course, I was endangering my reputation in submitting to a change of locks, for if they had got me by any means whatever, my standing would have been badly damaged."

"But you got out?"

"Yes, I got out in eighteen minutes, to the great surprise of the lieutenant. He had evidently been prepared to bet anything that I couldn't do it. Why he would have staked his head on keeping me in. Not that that article is of any value," added Houdini, sarcastically.

"I am sorry to hear Washington treated you unfairly," I said. "Have any other police departments showed the same attitude?"

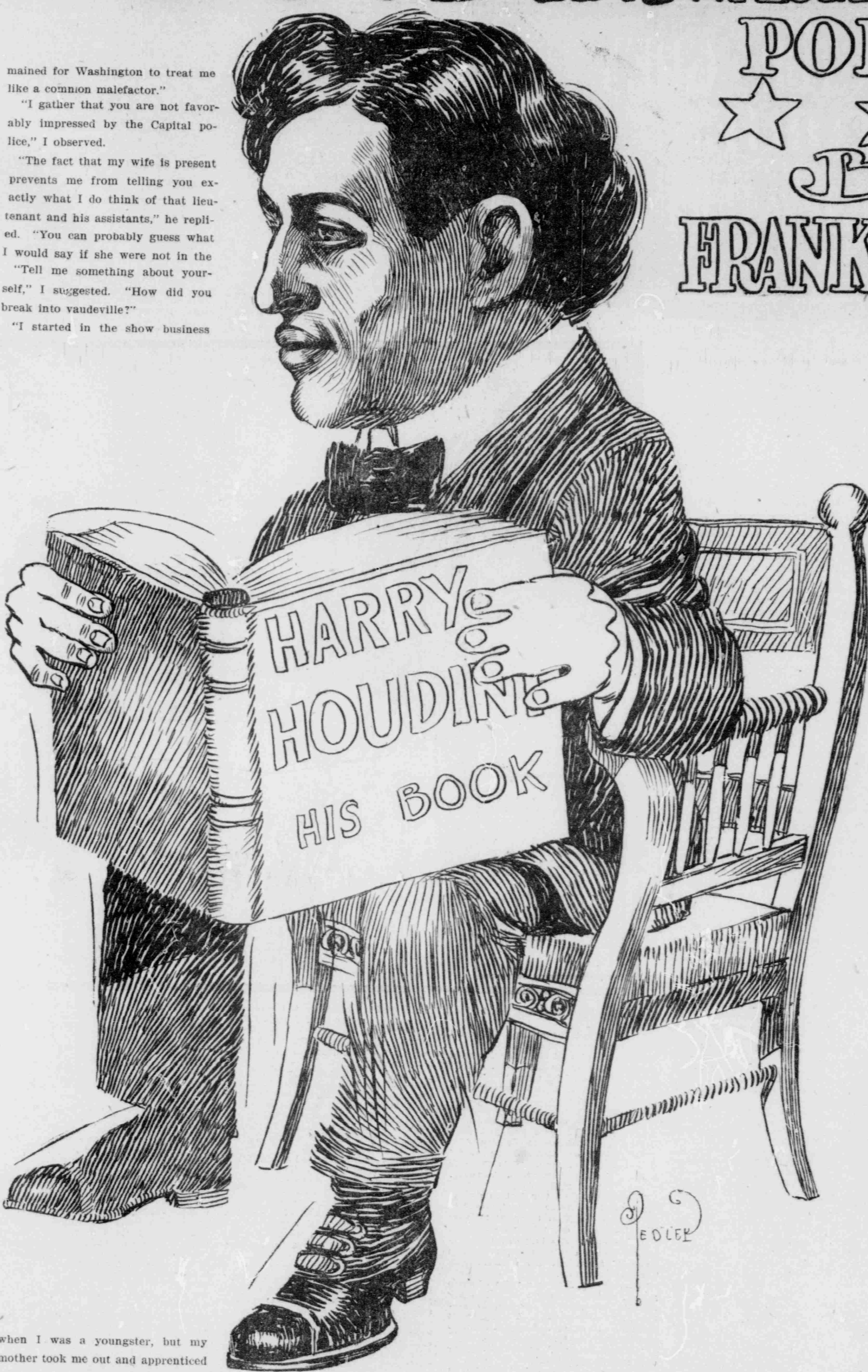
"Not one," he replied, with emphasis. "I have broken out of Scotland Yard, in London, and escaped from the police of Dresden, Berlin, Cologne, Paris, and dozens of other European cities. I was locked in the Moscow Siberian transportation cell, and examined beforehand by the hardened Russian secret police officials. But though they all made

mained for Washington to treat me like a common malefactor."

"I gather that you are not favorably impressed by the Capital police," I observed.

"The fact that my wife is present prevents me from telling you exactly what I do think of that lieutenant and his assistants," he replied. "You can probably guess what I would say if she were not in the 'Tell me something about yourself," I suggested. "How did you break into vaudeville?"

"I started in the show business



"Here is some literature you might like to take along," he said, producing a collection of pamphlets, covering his doings in foreign lands, as well as the story of his life from the time of his birth, April 6, 1873, in Appleton, Wis., to the present day. We shook hands cordially, and Houdini accompanied me down the hall to show me the proper stairway.

"I suppose if I get locked in any of these rooms you would get me out," I called back to him.

"Send for me any time you get



Found him with his wife, who is his stage partner.

locked up," he answered, with a laugh.

In the solitude of my den, I examined critically the imposing stack of police admissions to defeat at the hands of Houdini. After all, it does seem as if the sleuths are not as invincible as the authors of ten-cent literature would have us believe.

FRANK MORSE.

VENFALL.

Come, heap the logs, and send the blaze up higher. And make good cheer about the roaring fire. Nay, but the bluebird's here! Or, stay, I think I heard the laughing of the bobolink! Was that the ash upon a coal took shape? Or is 't the blue bloom of a pulpy grape? Within my chimney corner's happy gleam A cloud of wizard sprites the seasons seem. And all the year a many-colored dream! Can I mistake, or was 't yester-eve I saw the fireflies dance the fairies weave? Was it this morn that from his sphere of flame Love stooped, deific, uttering my name? Surely no music or of flute or bird Like the child's voice this afternoon I heard! Through what meridians of light you fare, Oh, lovely life, and through what stress you bear My wondering soul to this serene air! —Harriet Prescott Spofford in Century.



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and as I always do in the cities I visit, offered them the chance to lock me in and keep me there if they could. But I made the condition I always insist on that I should see the cell in which they intended placing me and examine the locks to be used. The lieutenant of po-

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